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The Outlook for Morocco

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THE OUTLOOK FOR MOROCCO

CONCLUSIONS

A. Morocco is a poor country with a medieval monarchy facing growing pressures for political, economic, and social change. King Hassan II, who was nearly overthrown in a military uprising in July 1971, has learned little from his narrow escape. He still believes that he can continue to rule in the style of an oriental potentate. This virtually assures that other challenges to the King will take place, but Hassan is in a strong position and could carry on for many years.

B. There is only a slight possibility that Hassan will shift course and gradually reduce his own political role. Even such a posture would not guarantee a decrease in political tension. Indeed, there is no assurance that the civilian opposition would cooperate with the King. The relaxation of royal authority might add to the uncertainties and whet politicians' appetites for further power.

C. The military establishment is both the chief prop of and potential threat to the crown. Thus far, General Oufkir, who has firm control of the armed forces, has shown no inclination to move against the King. He would be tempted to step in, however, if Hassan seemed to be fumbling badly in handling the problems of government. The odds in favor of a move by lower ranking officers, who seem more concerned with the need for basic change in society, are likely to grow over time. We do not have, however, any concrete evidence of plotting against the King in the Moroccan armed forces.

D. The regime is not likely to deal effectively with its growing economic and social problems, but these do not pose an immediate threat. Over the longer run, the failure to make basic agricultural and social reforms will promote the radicalization of the Moroccan political scene.

E. In foreign policy, Hassan is principally concerned with improving relations with the other states of the Maghreb and with boosting his stature among African and Islamic nations. While he does not want to antagonize the USSR, he desires friendly relations with the West in general and France and the US in particular. Hassan sees value in continued US operation of the Kenitra communications complex, but his will to preserve present arrangements would weaken if he judged their value to him was waning and if popular pressure mounted, say in the event of a major round of fighting between Arabs and Israel. The close relationship between the US and Morocco would be called into question if the monarchy were overthrown.

DISCUSSION

1. Morocco is a basically conservative and traditional state in which there are increasingly ominous rumblings of change. Its uneven exposure to European ideas and ways has left it a mixture of the traditional and the contemporary. Since the end of the French and Spanish Protectorates in 1956, it has made little progress in developing modern political, economic, and social institutions. The legacy of the French policy of divide and rule, accentuating the differences between the Berbers of the mountains and the Arabized population of the towns and lowlands, has played its part.* But even more significant have been the effects of the sharply segmented, still partly feudal, Moroccan social system in which power and authority are widely diffused among competing individuals and factions. Though the tribal structure has weakened among the Arabized population, the traditional

*The Moroccan population is overwhelmingly Berber in origin, and the majority of those who now call themselves Arabs are really Arabized Berbers. Those who are termed Berbers—roughly 25 percent of the population—are so called because of their adherence to Berber speech and folkways.

system still strongly influences political alignments and discourages the rise of effective national parties. Only the monarchy provides cohesion, combining as it does both political and religious authority and attracting the loyalty of both Arab and Berber.

2. The Moroccan system, despite its conservative character, has elements of flexibility and resilience. It is based on personal relationships and loyalties rather than on law. And serious confrontation is avoided by opening back doors when the front doors close. It is run by and for a small Arabized elite around King Hassan II. Corruption and favoritism are an inevitable component of the system and touch the lives and politics of most prominent and powerful people in Morocco, including the royal family and hangers-on at court. Within broad limits this is considered normal by most Moroccans, and the small politically conscious minority of the population becomes concerned only if corruption and personal influence exceed customary bounds. Many in this minority also become concerned when the King shows signs of losing control. It is precisely for these reasons that discontent has been rising in recent years in Morocco.

3. This whole structure was nearly toppled in July 1971 by a military uprising. At that time, a nucleus of middle grade officers, joined by some of the senior generals, seized and held the King briefly. Their coup quickly collapsed because of failures in planning and leadership, disunity among the conspirators, loyalty to the King in the armed forces, and bad luck. The alleged conspirators were promptly put to death—which may serve as a deterrent to future attempts or may merely cause future conspirators to plan more carefully. But the attempt indicated that pressures for change were mounting, and it called into question the durability of the traditional system in Morocco.

I. THE INSTITUTIONS OF POWER

A. The Monarchy

4. The centuries old Alaouite Dynasty is the central political institution in Morocco. King Hassan's father, who had been deposed, returned to the throne just before the French Protectorate ended in 1956 and consolidated the royal power. Since acceding to the throne in 1961, Hassan has gone even further than his father in asserting the supremacy of the monarchy. When bloody riots broke out in Casablanca in 1965, he prorogued parliament and virtually suspended political activity. But after five years of a "state of exception," he felt it expedient to regularize the regime. He drew up a constitution in 1970, confirming royal authority over all facets of the government and providing some illusion of popular participation in government.

5. Following the 1971 coup attempt, Hassan promulgated a new constitution. This document, though slightly more liberal than its predecessor, confirms the King's prerogative to make and unmake governments and to rule by decree if he deems necessary. While the civilian politicians bitterly criticized the uni-

lateral proclamation of this instrument by the King before negotiations on the role of the civilian parties in the government had been concluded, they recognize their inability to mount a successful open challenge to Hassan and concede the King's primacy—at least for the present.

6. King Hassan, now 43, is a skillful political manipulator, who has sought to bolster the loyalty of the military establishment to the throne and has greatly reduced the influence of civilian politicians. On the one hand he has attempted to prevent the formation of groups powerful enough to threaten his position, and on the other has made skillful use of patronage and the desire for office that animates Moroccan politicians in general. He has made office the gateway to riches, not political power, and his pandering to the acquisitiveness of the elite has aggravated the problem of corruption. Another source of discontent is his luxurious style of living which is considered inappropriate by both traditionalists and modernists.

7. Characteristically, Hassan has reacted firmly to opposition when he thought it could be overcome or, when faced by broader pressure, by a pretense of concession. Thus soon after the suppression of the attempted military coup of last July he acknowledged the need for popular participation in the governing process. This stance, however, has turned out to have been mainly a device to buy time. In his subsequent dealings with the politicians—consulting, but in the end facing them with faits accomplis—Hassan has clearly demonstrated that he does not want to share power nor to act as a constitutional monarch. His actions over the past 10 months lead us to judge that he believes it possible to continue the traditional system of royal rule without meaningful concessions to the political parties.

8. Though he has obvious political skills, Hassan does not concentrate his whole attention on governing. Not even the uprising of

July 1971 changed his preoccupation with the pursuit of pleasure. His expenditures of time and money on golf are legendary in Morocco as are the pomp and circumstance of royal travel. Moreover, he is autocratic and not disposed to take advice from others. Further, Hassan is erratic and changeable, acting on the spur of the moment and frequently reversing direction. The shock of his near deposition last July seems only to have accentuated this tendency. In short, he appears to have learned little from the attempted coup.

B. The Political Parties

9. The Istiqlal Party played the major role in bringing an end to the Protectorates in 1956, but the political parties today lack the strength to force the King to deal with them. In part, their weakness stems from the inability of the politicians to pull together. After independence this factionalism led the left wing of the Istiqlal to split off to form the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP). Other minor groupings also arose, including the Popular Movement, which was inspired by the Palace as a counterweight to the Istiqlal and has cooperated closely with the monarchy. Thanks to this disunity and rivalry, the civilian politicians found themselves unable to contest the assumption of supreme power by the monarch. The party leaders never effectively controlled the Cabinet, even during the first few years after independence when they were nominally part of the governmental coalition. And their organizations have been further weakened, demoralized, and disrupted by their exclusion from normal political activity since 1965.

10. The party leaders themselves have contributed to the growth of factionalism. The head of the more conservative Istiqlal Party, Allal al-Fassi, a traditional Arab leader from the city of Fez, has been willing to engage

in private discussions with the King and with leaders of other parties, but he is rigidly insistent that his party should have the dominant position. His generally uncompromising stand and elitist approach have undermined cooperative efforts among the politicians. He has just suffered a heart attack and may have to curtail his activity. This may make him all the less willing to see his political rivals in the UNFP play a major role in directing opposition to the King.

11. The UNFP leaders, Abderrahim Bouabid and Abdallah Ibrahim, are somewhat more flexible in their approach. Despite their differences with the Istiqlal and the rather imperious al-Fassi, they agreed in 1970 to patch together a so-called National Front of the two parties in order better to face the King with the appearance of unity. This effort has not been very successful. The rival parties continue to pull in different directions in their negotiations with the King. And even though the UNFP views the monarchy as basically a medieval institution which should be stripped of its dominant power, the party's leaders in talks with the King have been more conciliatory than their counterparts in the Istiqlal. Recognizing their party's weakness, Bouabid and Ibrahim have persevered in trying to keep contact with Hassan even after his unilateral postponement of elections demonstrated his contempt for these conversations.

12. The troubles of the parties also stem from their limited constituencies and poor image. Neither party has a mass base or a nation-wide following. In the 1963 elections the Istiqlal got about 30 and the UNFP about 22 percent of the vote; their popular backing has no doubt decreased in the interim. The Istiqlal appeals to the traditional Arab mercantile and land-owning elite, particularly around Fez, though it also has some support from Arabized elements in rural areas. The UNFP is basically an urban party, backed by

segments of the middle class, educated youth (whose number is increasing), and organized labor.

13. The major labor organization, the Moroccan Federation of Labor (UMT), with several hundred thousand members is closely allied to the UNFP but independent of it. Led by the charismatic and politically active Mahjoub Ben Seddik, the UMT has the capability to provoke serious disorders, particularly when allied with disaffected students. UMT leadership, which at times has had difficulties imposing discipline on certain locals, has recently been reshuffled to make room for younger and more militant cadres.

C. The Military

14. The 60,000-man military establishment is both the chief prop of and potential threat to the crown. In fact, the cadets who took part in the July uprising thought that they were protecting the King. Particularly since a number of officers of questionable loyalty were killed or removed as a result of the coup attempt, the remaining senior officers are generally conservative and monarchist in outlook. We know little about the attitudes and intentions of the officer corps as a whole, however. Broadly speaking, the armed forces do not conceive of the military establishment as an independent political force.

15. The uprising of last July was the first attack against the throne since independence. It stemmed in part from the revulsion of a few officers against the corruption rampant in the regime. This was particularly true of General Medbouh, who joined a group of middle grade officers who had taken the initiative in planning the coup attempt. Despite the King's subsequent purge of elements suspected of disloyalty, there are reports that some officers remain concerned over the continuing corruption in high places. Moreover,

the purge may itself have created resentment among the junior officers. There are also signs that some officers are disturbed by the King's fitful attention to the business of governing and by the unsteady course of his relations with the civilian politicians. We do not have, however, any concrete evidence of plotting against the King in the Moroccan armed forces.

16. The Moroccan military establishment is distinguished by the high percentage of Berbers in its senior ranks. During the Protectorate, the French consciously encouraged Berbers to enter the military profession as a counterweight to the Arabized majority which dominated the political scene. Since independence there have been no visible signs of significant ethnic rivalry within the military. But in Moroccan society at large many Berbers resent the favored position of the Arabs from Fez in the economic and administrative sectors. The army leaders continue to favor Berber officers, and Berber clannishness could become a more important factor in the attitudes of the officer corps.

17. The present leader of the military establishment, General Mohamed Oufkir, is unquestionably the most important figure in the country after King Hassan. Oufkir is a Berber whose power is based not only on his closeness to the King, but on his longtime control of the internal security, police, and intelligence networks. An outstanding administrator, he is also widely feared for his tough and frequently brutal treatment of his opponents. (He is widely believed to have been responsible for the kidnapping and murder of leftist Moroccan opposition leader Mehdi Ben Barka in 1965.) Long relied on by the King, Oufkir further strengthened his position after the July 1971 uprising when he was given unlimited powers to restore public order. He now serves as the commander of the Royal Armed Forces and Minister of National Defense.

18. Despite his years in the public eye, the 52-year old Oufkir has remained a figure of some mystery. He is conservative, bent on maintaining order, and is contemptuous of the civilian politicians. In the past he has shown sympathy for Hassan's efforts to strengthen the authority of the monarchy. But since July 1971 his attitudes toward the regime have seemed less clear. There is speculation among the officer corps that Oufkir may be having second thoughts about Hassan. He is apparently attempting in low key to persuade the King to change his life-style, but Oufkir does not seem to be encouraging Hassan to make basic reforms. Oufkir himself apparently does not believe that fundamental alterations in the systems are necessary or wise, partly because such changes might threaten his—and the military establishment's—position.

II. PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

A. Economic Development and Social Change

19. The interplay of political forces goes on against the background of increasingly serious economic and social problems. The country is independent, largely self-sufficient, and has fairly flourishing trade. It is not embroiled in conflict with its neighbors. But it has many of the familiar ills of developing states: a wide gap between rich and poor, massive unemployment and underemployment, very rapid population growth, disaffected students and an embittered younger urban generation, an ineffective and insufficient educational system, and a self-centered and greedy elite. Morocco exports over \$100 million worth of phosphates annually, but it lacks oil or other resources likely to provide the revenues needed for rapid development.

20. The Moroccan economy has not recorded an impressive performance since in-

dependence. It lags far behind neighboring oil-rich Algeria in almost all indices of economic growth. Indeed, until 1967 gross national product increased little faster than population growth. Moreover, the country passed through inflation and recession which depressed economic activity significantly. In the past few years, however, the government has been somewhat more successful. It increased investment in irrigation facilities, modernized phosphate mines, and improved the efficiency of tax collection. Incentives to private investment have also had effect, and balance-of-payments surpluses have led to relaxation of foreign exchange and tariff regulations. Morocco has shown a growth rate of about 5.5 percent between 1968-1972, a favorable foreign exchange situation, increased earnings from tourism, and bumper harvests. Though the July uprising added uncertainties, some of the strains in the economy have been relieved. And the prospects for growth in the small modern industrial and agricultural sectors are good.

21. King Hassan talks of the need for social and economic development, but thus far has not made a determined effort to attack the problems of the traditional sector of the economy. Important in his thinking is the risk of unhinging the political and social structure of the agricultural sector, which sustains most of the population and contributes significantly to overall economic activity. There has been some investment in dams and irrigation facilities, but this is only beginning to show results. Agriculture thus remains largely dependent on rainfall which is capricious. Droughts have been frequent and productivity has increased very slowly. More important, the King has not encouraged efforts to change landholding patterns and the organization of the rural sector as demanded by the National Front. As long as Hassan fails to promote re-

form of the agrarian sector, Morocco's prospects for greater economic progress will remain dim.

22. These political constraints on development are not likely to be soon overcome. The present government is unprepared to take bold initiatives in economic and social realms. In fact, the nature and execution of reform is a major point of dispute between the King and the political parties, who call for such steps as agrarian reform and nationalization of the key sectors of the economy. Even if the National Front were to gain control of parliament following elections, the party leaders themselves would find it hard to agree on concrete programs. Under the best of circumstances, it would be difficult to carry out radical land reform and to modernize traditional agriculture practices. Reform of the French-style educational system is also needed, but the present regime is not disposed to make more than minimal changes. Any government would find it both expensive and difficult to modernize Morocco's schools.

23. Basic economic and social problems do not pose an immediate threat to the regime. The peasantry is politically inert and most of those who are the most economically disadvantaged have the least political power and initiative. It is not easy to mobilize the rural elements for political ends even with appeals to economic self-interest. Besides, the peasants are so steeped in the traditional mold that they do not generally blame the regime for their poverty. For their part, the political party leaders, perhaps because they recognize that rousing the peasantry is dangerous for them, are not attempting to foment rural discontent.

24. But the traditional social order is slowly giving way before the forces of change. The growing exodus from the farms is creating ever larger concentrations of migrants who maintain a precarious existence in slums on

the outskirts of the cities, in effect living between the traditional and modern sectors of society. Education is gradually enlarging the ranks of aspirants to the ruling elite. But denied political power and often without satisfactory jobs, these people become potential dissidents. The younger urban generation is coming increasingly to believe that the continuation of the monarchy is incompatible with social and economic progress. All this contributes to an ever expanding reservoir of discontent.

25. Over the long run, this process poses a potent challenge to the Moroccan Government. Up to now, the voices calling for a complete restructuring of the system have been few; most advocates of this view have found it necessary to go into exile. But student unrest is growing, and the tiny Party of Liberation and Socialism (which is the Moroccan Communist Party) is seeking a broader role, although to date its activities have been well circumscribed by the security forces. The King's immobility on the matter of reform will no doubt encourage the growth of opposition. It will be some time, however, before challenges from this quarter could seriously tax the capacity of the regime to keep order. But clearly continuing failure to enact reforms would promote an eventual radicalization of the Moroccan political scene.

B. The Political Outlook

26. Hassan's monopoly of political power brings him into direct conflict with the civilian politicians. The new constitution clearly represents less than they had hoped to achieve. In an effort to press Hassan, they announced a boycott of the referendum to approve it, though they did not actively marshal their followers to abstain nor did they repudiate the new constitution once promulgated. Hassan's postponement of elections also disappointed some, although there are signs that the Istiqlal

was not unhappy with the prospect of additional time in which to organize. But particularly if the King postpones new parliamentary elections beyond 1973, the temper of the opposition seems certain to rise. Already the leadership of the UNFP faces pressure from its rank-and-file members not to acquiesce in concessions to the King. And general disillusionment over his failure to change his ways after the July uprising is growing. Thus the civilian parties—whether in concert or separately—are likely to increase their opposition to Hassan.

27. Hassan, however, is not impressed by the political parties or their leaders. Hence, the odds are that he will continue much in the pattern of the past, holding the reins himself and turning to repression if need be. He clearly prefers to rule through a non-party government, like the present one, which is entirely subservient to his will. He may refuse to allow elections on one pretext or another or he may rig the results to favor his hand-picked candidates to deny the franchise significant meaning. At the same time, he might feel it expedient to leave hope alive that one day he would relax control in order to lure the political parties to remain within the system, and he will make gestures intended to assuage the opposition's frustrations.

28. This course entails risks. Hassan shows no signs of providing dynamic leadership; his personal habits militate against success in providing the efficient and capable rule required to keep the present system functioning smoothly over the longer run. If he embarked on a course utilizing even more repression, discontent would be likely to focus increasingly on the monarchy. In this event, it is difficult to predict how long Hassan could remain master of the situation, though given luck, he might be able to carry on for many

years. But Moroccan politics would be tense and it is likely that other challenges to the King would be made.

29. There is, of course, a slight possibility that Hassan will recognize this danger, change his ways, allow parliament to be elected and function freely, and gradually reduce his obvious political role. Even this conciliatory posture would not guarantee a decrease in political tension. Indeed, there is no assurance that the civilian opposition would cooperate with the King. The relaxation of royal authority might add to the uncertainties and whet politicians' appetites for further power. It could therefore lead to louder and more articulate demands by civilian political leaders. But the opposition is aware of the risks in challenging the King this directly and is thus likely to be moderate in its demands for some time. Hence, this course offers some possibility of transition to a more broadly based regime without passing through a revolutionary stage.

30. In any event, maintaining the loyalty of the military is the key to Hassan's success. Thus far, General Oufkir and his senior associates have shown no inclination to take over the government—and Oufkir had every opportunity to do so in the wake of the unsuccessful coup last July. He would be tempted to step in, however, if Hassan seemed to be fumbling badly in handling the problems of government. Indeed, the King's lengthy consultations with the politicians have already raised within the military both fears that he might surrender too much and concern at his image of impotence. Oufkir, with a firm grip on the military establishment, would stand an excellent chance of success, should he decide to depose Hassan. His chances would be considerably better than those of the officers whose effort miscarried last July, for he could use regular command channels. Moreover, he is the most able general remaining in the armed forces.

Moves against the King by lower ranking officers would be unlikely to succeed while Oufkir is on the scene. His recent purge has complicated the task of plotters within the armed forces as well as increasing the reliability of the officer corps.

31. Over time, however, the odds in favor of a military coup are likely to grow. The younger officers are better educated than their superiors and appear more concerned with the need for basic change in society. Further, they are exposed to the example of revolutionary regimes, especially in Algeria, and to the cumulative impact of antimonarchial sentiment elsewhere in the Arab world. In the long run, therefore, the gradual modernization of the officer corps seems destined to make the military establishment a less reliable prop for the monarchy. And eventually a significant proportion of the officers may come to subscribe to the dissatisfaction with Hassan now prevalent among younger urban civilians.

32. If a successor regime were led by General Oufkir or one of his senior associates, such as General Driss Ben Aomar, it would not necessarily be antimonarchial in outlook. Depending on the circumstances that brought it to power, it might institute a regency for the nine-year old Crown Prince Sidi Mohammed, and continue much in the vein of King Hassan, but with far more sustained attention to the problems of government. A regime dominated by the younger officers would be strongly opposed to retaining any remnants of the monarchy and would perhaps resemble the government in Algeria. Nationalist in orientation and focused inward on Morocco's domestic problems, it would be likely to promote rapid social change and measures to produce a more equitable distribution of income. But the disappearance of the monarchy would also promote a revival of regionalist forces.

III. FOREIGN RELATIONS

33. The King, who is by and large the master of Morocco's foreign policy, has limited international aspirations. He is mainly concerned with his neighbors in the Maghreb and to a lesser extent with recognition by African and Islamic nations as a leader. (He is host of an OAU summit meeting being held in June 1972 and was elected its chairman.) He has backed down from the territorial demands espoused by his father and is seeking an amicable resolution of Morocco's border dispute with Algeria. Libya's verbal support for the Moroccan insurgents last July has seriously strained Moroccan-Libyan relations, producing reciprocal propaganda attacks and mutual suspicions of subversion. And Hassan's desire to remain detached from the Arab-Israeli issue conflicts with his wish to be accepted as an Arab leader.

34. Dealings with the Great Powers are also troublesome for Hassan. He wants friendly relations with the West in general and the US and France in particular. But at the same time, he does not want to antagonize the USSR. Though he is suspicious of Soviet naval activity in the Mediterranean and fears that the USSR has aims to acquire hegemony in North Africa, he makes an effort to appear evenhanded. Hence, he permits some Soviet vessels to call at Moroccan ports and high Moroccan officials exchange visits with their Soviet counterparts. He has also concluded several significant economic deals with the USSR for projects such as electrical generating plants and irrigation facilities.

35. The US has been closely associated with the Moroccan monarchy over the years. US military and economic aid have been relatively large (about \$860 million since independence: of which some \$77 million is military and about \$783 million economic). Moreover, inside Morocco the US is widely regarded as a

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staunch supporter of the royal regime. Despite domestic criticism, Hassan, for his part, has permitted the US to operate the important Kenitra communications complex. And he is not eager to see this relationship disturbed.

36. But forces that threaten cooperation with the US are rising. As elsewhere in Africa and Asia, nationalist feeling is growing in Morocco. This process would no doubt be speeded if party politics and political campaigning are permitted as provided by the constitution. Both the UNFP and the Istiqlal stand for US withdrawal from the Kenitra facilities, and would be tempted to raise this issue on occasion to garner additional popular support. Hassan still sees value in retaining this link to the US and uses it as an inducement for additional military aid. However, he may in-

terpret present US plans to reduce the complement at the Kenitra complex as an indication that it is a waning asset for him. These calculations would weaken his will to preserve the arrangement if popular pressure against the American presence were to mount, say in the event of a major round of fighting between Arabs and Israel.

37. The close relationship between the US and Morocco could be far more seriously disrupted if the monarchy were to be overthrown. A conservative military regime would try to maintain close ties with the US. But even such a regime would be influenced by pressures of nationalist sentiment. A radical regime would almost certainly adopt a hostile stance to the US, and could be expected to terminate US access to the Kenitra facilities.